CYCLICAL REVIEW OF SOUTH CAROLINA'S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

Accountability Framework Report

DECEMBER 2020

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Center for Assessment

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Section 59-18-910 of the South Carolina Code of Law calls for the Education Oversight Committee (EOC), working with the South Carolina State Board of Education (SBE), and a broad-based group of stakeholders, to conduct a comprehensive cyclical review of the accountability system. One of the key charges for the cyclical review is to consider how the state's accountability system reflects evidence that students have developed the skills and characteristics outlined in the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate.*

Pursuant to this legislative mandate, the EOC and the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) convened the South Carolina Accountability Advisory Committee (AAC), comprised of members who represented the interests and priorities of various educational stakeholders in South Carolina. The EOC and SCDE contracted with the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment (the Center) to facilitate the cyclical review process.

The AAC met a total of seven times from February to December 2020. The primary focus of the AAC's work was to identify educational policy priorities, discuss system design and implementation considerations and constraints, review key elements of the current accountability system, and, if deemed necessary, recommend changes to the accountability system. During the review process, the AAC was encouraged to offer innovative ideas for improving the existing accountability system and not be constrained by prior practices. However, the committee also attended to critical technical and operational considerations to ensure that the accountability system is coherent, defensible, useful, feasible, and compliant with state and federal requirements. What follows is a summary of the AAC's key findings and recommendations.

GOALS AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The design of any accountability system should be guided by explicit goals and intended outcomes. The goals articulate at a high level what the system is intended to accomplish. The AAC devoted a significant amount of time to discuss and refine the goals of the South Carolina accountability system. The following statement represents the committee's consensus with respect to the system's goals.

The South Carolina accountability system should both reflect and incent:

  ✓ **Attainment of knowledge, skills, and characteristics that support the components of the**
    Profile of the South Carolina Graduate,

  ✓ **Elimination of access and equity gaps across the state with respect to both academic**
    performance and the broader set of trans-academic skills, and

  ✓ **Improvement of student learning via dissemination of clear, actionable information to help**
    districts, schools, and families evaluate and improve the effectiveness of their programs.

Design principles are another set of important guiding decisions to inform the development of the accountability system. If the goals represent the intended destination on a roadmap (i.e., where we would like to go), the design principles serve to establish the nature and manner of the route (i.e., how we get there). Accountability design, however, is always a case of optimization under constraints that requires tradeoffs between several competing priorities. The AAC considered several competing priorities

in accountability design. While there was not consensus, a majority of committee members agreed that the following design principles should be prioritized in the South Carolina accountability system:

1. Most committee members indicated that **changing the model to reflect needed improvements** was a higher priority than minimizing changes to the existing model in order to measure year-to-year change.

2. More committee members agreed that the system's ability **to produce meaningful comparisons within the same year** is more important than allowing flexibility in how schools earn points.

3. More committee members felt that a **simple and streamlined model** is preferred over a more comprehensive model.

4. Committee members felt strongly that South Carolina should have **one accountability system that meets all federal and state requirements** instead of multiple systems to pursue state-specific priorities outside of the constraints of the federal system. Most committee members also agreed that a hybrid system, in which some but not all elements in the system satisfy federal requirements, is also a promising approach. Such a system requires some decision-making about how tightly to couple state and federal requirements.

5. The committee members also strongly preferred that the state **take time to study some components more fully** before determining if/how they should be included in the accountability system over moving quickly to implement any system change recommendations.

6. More committee members felt that the state should **privilege accountability metrics that can be reported quickly** over a broader range of elements that may be more informative.

7. The committee preferred to **collect new types of data, such as performance on trans-academic skills or post-secondary performance,** that can more fully realize the design priorities even if doing so is more time consuming, expensive, and burdensome, especially in the initial years.

The AAC was instructed to ground its subsequent discussions about and recommendations for the South Carolina accountability system components on these agreed-upon goals and design principles.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The AAC's recommendations are organized into three categories:

1. Revising the ESSA School Accountability System
2. Enhancing Data Collection and/or Reporting
3. Engaging in Further Research and Development

The first category represents changes to the indicators or design decisions that inform ratings or classifications of schools in the state and federal accountability systems. The second category reflects suggestions for additional information the state should collect and publicly report to help a wide range

of stakeholders (e.g., policymakers, community leaders, educators, and parents) better understand and support school success. The third category represents ideas that the committee feels are promising but will benefit from additional research to determine if or how they might be suitable for implementation. The tables below summarized the committee's recommendation in each of the categories.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR *REVISING THE ESSA SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM*
Develop and report new information related to achievement gaps in academic performance that: • Includes all student groups, • Is tied to a fixed and meaningful criterion, and • Measures progress toward elimination of gaps. Achievement gap measures should be prominently and clearly reported in a manner that is easily accessed and understood by stakeholders. Schools with achievement gaps that are large and persistent should NOT attain favorable ratings.
Evaluate the current school performance ratings to ensure they reflect clear, appropriate, and consistent criteria. This includes the following: • Study the range of 'school profiles' for each rating level to certify these patterns are appropriate and consistent with the state's educational goals, especially related to equity, • Revise performance expectations as necessary, and • Clearly communicate the meaning of each rating in terms of the expected performance.

Consider the following changes to the graduation rate and college and career readiness (CCR) indicators:
• Evaluate and potentially adjust the weights of graduation rate and the CCR indicators, and
• Include extended (5-year) graduation rate, but with the following parameters:
   - Extended graduation rate should have less influence than the traditional 4-year rate to maintain on-time graduation as the primary goal, and
   - Extended graduation rate alone should not decrease accountability scores.

Career-ready credit should be awarded to qualifying students who earn the South Carolina High School Credential. The state should engage in ongoing evaluation and monitoring to ensure that students are not inappropriately routed to this option.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR *ENHANCING DATA COLLECTION AND/OR REPORTING*

The state should conduct ongoing monitoring and evaluation of all career readiness measures to ensure patterns of participation and performance demonstrate that students are well-prepared for post-secondary career success. Evaluation results should be publicly and prominently reported.

The committee supports research, development, and implementation of a reporting initiative to better communicate *Conditions for Success* for South Carolina's districts and schools. This component should include factors such as:

- Educator quality, training, and competencies, including cultural competencies,
- Diversity of educator and leader workforce,
- Rates of disciplinary actions, such as suspension and expulsion, including for early learners,
- Access to resources within the community (e.g., mentoring programs, parent engagement, corporate partnerships), and
- Data to inform readiness and capacity for remote learning such as infrastructure (e.g., device availability, connectivity) and training.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR *ENGAGING IN FURTHER RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT*

Research alternatives for developing academic and trans-academic measures for students in kindergarten to grade 2.

Consider developing state guidance and standards for performance demonstration (e.g., capstone projects, service initiatives, research studies) for South Carolina high school students.

Evaluate alternatives for through-course assessment.

Assess whether the criteria for student progress, for both the academic content areas and English language proficiency, are appropriate.

Social sciences, especially citizenship, is not adequately addressed. Consider additional measures, perhaps for each grade.

The full report to follow includes a comprehensive description of the cyclical review process for the South Carolina accountability system, including committee membership, topics discussed at each AAC meeting, research considered by the committee, and rationale for the committee's recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

South Carolina legislation calls for the Education Oversight Committee (EOC), working with the South Carolina State Board of Education (SBE), and a broad-based group of stakeholders, to conduct a comprehensive cyclical review of the accountability system. Specifically, Section 59-18-910 of the South Carolina Code of Law states:

> Beginning in 2020, the Education Oversight Committee, working with the State Board of Education and a broad based group of stakeholders, selected by the Education Oversight Committee, shall conduct a comprehensive cyclical review of the accountability system at least every five years and shall provide the General Assembly with a report on the findings and recommended actions to improve the accountability system and to accelerate improvements in student and school performance. The stakeholders must include the State Superintendent of Education and the Governor, or the Governor's designee. The other stakeholders include, but are not limited to, parents, business and industry persons, community leaders, and educators. The cyclical review must include recommendations of a process for determining if students are graduating with the world class skills and life and career characteristics of the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate to be successful in postsecondary education and in careers. The accountability system needs to reflect evidence that students have developed these skills and characteristics.

One of the key charges for the cyclical review is to consider how the state's accountability system reflects evidence that students have developed the skills and characteristics outlined in the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate.* Figure 1 below is a visual summary of the knowledge, skills, and characteristics in the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate.*

Pursuant to this legislative mandate, the EOC and the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) contracted with the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment (the Center) in January 2020 to support the cyclical review process. This report is a summary of the process. It includes a description of the Accountability Advisory Committee (AAC), the goals and design priorities agreed upon by the AAC, the AAC's suggestions for components of the accountability system, and recommendations by the AAC. As required by the legislation, the intended audience of this report is the South Carolina General Assembly.
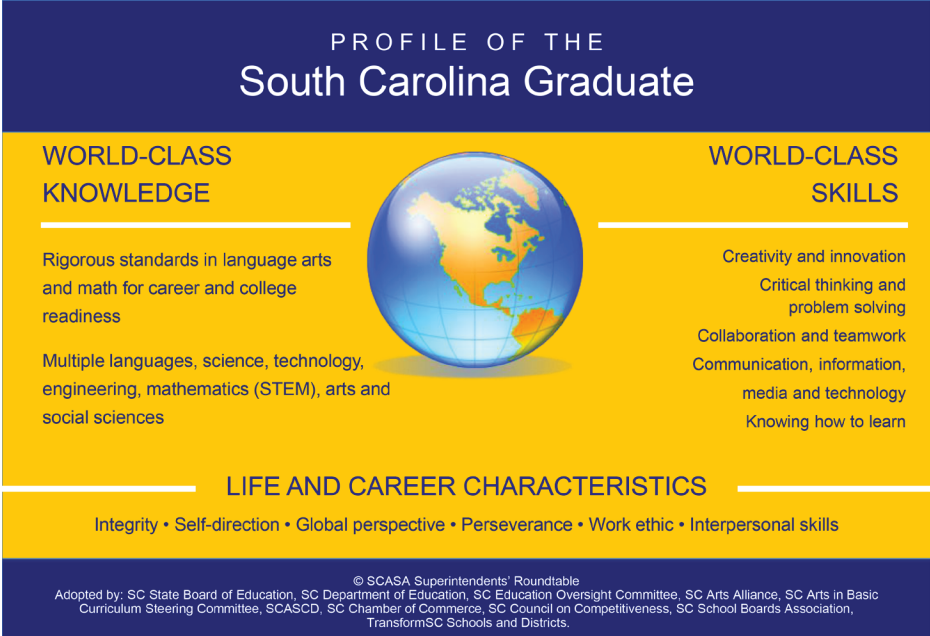

PROFILE OF THE
South Carolina Graduate

WORLD-CLASS KNOWLEDGE

Rigorous standards in language arts and math for career and college readiness

Multiple languages, science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), arts and social sciences

WORLD-CLASS SKILLS

Creativity and innovation
Critical thinking and problem solving
Collaboration and teamwork
Communication, information, media and technology
Knowing how to learn

LIFE AND CAREER CHARACTERISTICS

Integrity • Self-direction • Global perspective • Perseverance • Work ethic • Interpersonal skills

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Adopted by: SC State Board of Education, SC Department of Education, SC Education Oversight Committee, SC Arts Alliance, SC Arts in Basic Curriculum Steering Committee, SCASCD, SC Chamber of Commerce, SC Council on Competitiveness, SC School Boards Association, TransformSC Schools and Districts.

Figure 1: Profile of the South Carolina Graduate.

SOUTH CAROLINA ACCOUNTABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

This section describes how the South Carolina Accountability Advisory Committee (AAC) was constituted and chronicles the process that the committee went through to evaluate the current accountability system and make its recommendations.

COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

The EOC and the SCDE worked with the Center to assemble the AAC. According to the membership requirements specified in Section 59-18-910, the committee should include members that represent the interests and priorities of various educational stakeholders in South Carolina. Based on its experience working with similar committees in other states, the Center suggested a committee size of about 10-15 members from state leadership, schools, districts, advocacy groups, and the broader community. Table 1 shows the committee that the SCDE and the EOC put together based on these criteria. The Appendix shows the attendance of the committee members at the meetings and webinars throughout 2020.

Table 1: 2020 South Carolina Accountability Advisory Committee Membership

COMMITTEE MEMBER	GROUP REPRESENTATION
Molly Spearman	State Superintendent
Melanie Barton	Governor or designee
Cynthia Downs	State Board of Education
Brian Newsome	EOC, principal, parent
Jessica Jackson	Business representative (Boeing)
James Burton	Business representative (Continental Tires)
Jo Anne Anderson	Community member
J.T. McLawhorn	Community member
Chandra Jefferson	Educator: classroom teacher
Neil Vincent	Educator: district superintendent
Sandy Brossard	Educator: district instructional leader
Takesha Pollock	Parent
Ian Feigel	Parent
Wanda Hassler	Local school board member (Darlington County)
Hope Rivers	Higher education representative
Georgia Mjartan	Early childhood education representative

ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE

The AAC's purpose was to work with the EOC and the SCDE to help state leaders make good decisions about the design and implementation of school accountability. With that purpose in mind, the primary focus of the AAC was to identify educational policy priorities, discuss system design and implementation considerations and constraints, review key elements of the current accountability system, and, if deemed necessary, recommend changes to the accountability system. During the review process, the AAC was encouraged to offer innovative ideas for improving the existing accountability system and not be constrained by prior practices. However, the committee also attended to critical technical and operational considerations to ensure that the framework is coherent, defensible, useful, feasible, and compliant with state and federal requirements.

The original plan shared with the AAC included five meetings during 2020 with three all-day in-person meetings and two virtual webinars. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, in-person gatherings were not ideal for most of 2020. Consequently, the all-day in-person meetings were re-purposed as shorter virtual webinars with more focused discussion topics. Table 2 summarizes the dates and topics addressed at each AAC meeting.

Table 2: Summary of 2020 AAC Meetings

MEETING	DATE	TOPICS ADDRESSED
AAC Meeting #1 (in-person)	Feb 24, 2020	• Overview of current accountability system and design principles, • Initial discussion of goals and priorities of the system, • Evaluation of what components of the system are working well and what components are not working as intended.
AAC Meeting #2 (virtual)	May 5, 2020	• Articulation of goals of the accountability system, • Mapping of elements of the *Profile of a South Carolina Graduate* to components of the current system, • Discussion of options for the school quality or student success (SQSS) indicator.
AAC Meeting #3 (hybrid)	July 28, 2020	• Articulation of design principles and priorities for the accountability system, • Examination of system components and determination of which components should be preserved and which should be changed, • Discussion of analysis and/or research to inform recommendations.
AAC Meeting #4 (virtual)	Oct 27, 2020	• Review of *The Future of SC's Accountability System* stakeholder survey results, • Review of initial set of committee recommendations based on discussions at previous meetings, • Focused discussion on the committee's recommendations for eliminating achievement gap.

MEETING	DATE	TOPICS ADDRESSED
AAC Meeting #5 (virtual)	Nov 9, 2020	• Affirmation of committee's recommendations on eliminating achievement gaps and evaluating performance expectations, • Focused discussion on the committee's recommendations for extended graduation rate and career readiness criteria, • Initial brainstorming of ideas for "conditions for success" measures.
AAC Meeting #6 (virtual)	Dec 10, 2020	• Committee feedback on partial draft of the South Carolina *Accountability Framework Report* (i.e., this document), • Affirmation of committee's recommendations on extended graduation rate and high school credential, • Focused discussion on career readiness criteria, particularly with respect to military readiness, • Focused discussion on recommendation for "conditions for success" measures, • Brainstorm of ideas to frame recommendation for engagement, • Review of the committee's recommendations for research and development.
AAC Meeting #7 (virtual)	Dec 16, 2020	• Committee feedback on complete draft of the South Carolina *Accountability Framework Report* (i.e., this document), • Resolution of gaps and/or points of disagreement, • Affirmation of the committee's findings and recommendations.

GOALS AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Goals

The design of any accountability system should be guided by explicit goals and intended outcomes. The goals articulate at a high level what the system is intended to accomplish. Clear goal statements serve to direct and help prioritize design decisions about the system. The AAC devoted a significant amount of time during its first and second meetings to discuss and refine the goals of the South Carolina accountability system. The following statement represents the committee's consensus with respect to the system's goals.

The South Carolina accountability system should both reflect and incent:

> • **Attainment of knowledge, skills, and characteristics that support the components of the** *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*,
> South Carolina's vision for its education system is encapsulated in the *Profile of the South*

Carolina Graduate (the Profile). The Profile serves as the guiding framework that motivated and informed the committee's discussion. The committee emphasized the importance of ensuring the state accountability system is tied to college and career readiness as expressed in the Profile. The committee also recognized that the current system may not be sufficiently broad to capture all Profile components, especially measures of world-class skills and life and career characteristics and the various pathways to success.

- **Elimination of access and equity gaps across the state with respect to both academic performance and the broader set of trans-academic skills, and**
  The committee's concerns and commitment to promoting equity with the accountability system cannot be overstated. This was brought into greater focus by the COVID-19 pandemic, which was ongoing during the cyclical review process. Several committee members expressed concerns about how the COVID-19 school disruptions would highlight and likely further exacerbate the digital divide and achievement gaps. The need for the accountability system to identify and signal gaps in access and equity in the state for various student groups is more critical and prevalent than ever.

- **Improvement of student learning via dissemination of clear, actionable information to help districts, schools, and families evaluate and improve the effectiveness of their programs.**
  The committee acknowledged that outcomes from the accountability system are only helpful if they are clearly understood, accurately interpreted, and appropriately acted on by the educational stakeholders that the system is intended to serve. The committee also recognized accountability reporting and supports as a key area for improvement with the current system. The committee discussed strategies such as enhancing the scope, clarity, and utility of information provided to stakeholders, exploring reports for indicators that provide more 'along-the-way' information about risk factors earlier, and considering how the state can facilitate the sharing of promising practices for school improvement.

When asked about key words that committee members felt should be associated with the goals of the South Carolina accountability system, the most prominent ones were equitable, attainable, and actionable (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Key words that the AAC associated with the accountability system

Design Principles

Design principles are another set of important guiding decisions to inform the development of the accountability system. If the goals represent the intended destination on a roadmap (i.e., where we would like to go), the design principles serve to establish the nature and manner of the route (i.e., how we get there). Design principles can also serve as a basis for evaluating whether the system is working as intended. Accountability design, however, is always a case of optimization under constraints that requires tradeoffs between several competing priorities. During its third meeting, the AAC considered seven pairs of competing priorities in accountability design. The competing priorities were:

1. Change vs. Comparing Over Time
2. Flexibility vs. Within Year Comparison
3. Simplicity vs. Comprehensiveness
4. Single System vs. Multiple Systems (vs. Hybrid System)
5. Implementation – Right vs. Right Now
6. Reporting – Efficiency vs. Efficacy
7. New Information vs. Minimizing Burden

A short document explaining the tradeoffs associated with each pair of competing priorities was shared with committee members as part of the advanced reading materials. Committee members were polled about their preference for each tradeoff and were invited to share their perspectives. While there was not consensus, more committee members agreed that the following design principles should be prioritized in the South Carolina accountability system:

1. Most committee members indicated that **changing the model to reflect needed improvements** was a higher priority than minimizing changes to the existing model in order to measure year-to-year change.

2. More committee members agreed that the system's ability **to produce meaningful comparisons within the same year** is more important than allowing flexibility in how schools earn points.

3. More committee members felt that a **simple and streamlined model** is preferred over a more comprehensive model.

4. Committee members felt strongly that South Carolina should have **one accountability system that meets all federal and state requirements** instead of multiple systems to pursue state-specific priorities outside of the constraints of the federal system. Most committee members also agreed that a hybrid system, in which some but not all elements in the system satisfy federal requirements, is also a promising approach. Such a system requires some decision-making about how tightly to couple state and federal requirements.

5. The committee members also strongly preferred that the state **take time to study some components more fully** before determining if/how they should be included in the accountability system over moving quickly to implement any system change recommendations.

6. More committee members felt that the state should **privilege accountability metrics that can be reported quickly** over a broader range of elements that may be more informative.

7. The committee preferred to **collect new types of data, such as performance on trans-academic skills or post-secondary performance,** that can more fully realize the design priorities even if doing so is more time consuming, expensive, and burdensome, especially in the initial years.

The AAC was instructed to ground its subsequent discussions about and recommendations for the South Carolina accountability system components on the goals and design principles summarized in this section.

SYSTEM COMPONENTS

Once the goals and design principles for South Carolina accountability system were established, the AAC took a closer look at the components of the system. The current system, as described in detail in South Carolina's approved plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), includes the following accountability indicators and associated point allocation in the overall school rating.

Elementary and Middle School

- Academic Achievement = 35 points with ELP; 40 points without ELP

- Student Progress = 35 points with ELP; 40 points without ELP

- Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency (ELP) = 10 points, if English learner n-size ≥ 20

- School Quality or Student Success (SQSS)
    - Preparing for Success (Science) = 10 points
    - Positive and Effective Learning Environment = 10 points

High School

- Academic Achievement = 25 points with ELP; 30 points without ELP

- Graduation Rate = 25 points with ELP; 30 points without ELP

- Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency (ELP) = 10 points, if English learner n-size ≥ 20

- School Quality or Student Success (SQSS)
    - Preparing for Success (Biology and U.S. History) = 10 points
    - College and Career Readiness = 25 points
    - Positive and Effective Learning Environment = 5 points

Each school receives an overall score out of 100 possible points and is assigned one of five ratings: Excellent, Good, Average, Below Average, or Unsatisfactory. The school is also assigned separate ratings, based on the same five performance categories, for each indicator. The school's performance is reported for all students and for each subgroup with enough students (i.e., n-size ≥ 20).

RELATIONSHIP TO *PROFILE OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA GRADUATE*

One of the key charges for the committee is to examine the extent to which the state's accountability system reflects the skills and characteristics outlined in the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate* (or the Profile). To support this review, the Center facilitators generated crosswalks between the elements of the Profile and current accountability system components. Tables 3 and 4 show the crosswalks organized by the key areas of the Profile: World Class Knowledge, World Class Skills, and Life and Career Characteristics.

Table 3: Profile-Accountability System Crosswalk: World Class Knowledge

PROFILE OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA GRADUATE	SOUTH CAROLINA ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM
Rigorous standards in language arts and math for career and college readiness Multiple languages, science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), arts and social sciences	Academic Achievement Indicator: • Grades 3-8: Results on SC Ready in 3-8 ELA and Mathematics • High School: End-of-course assessments in Algebra I and English I/II
	Student Progress Indicator (for Grades 3-8): • Value-added growth measuring gains of students in ELA and Mathematics
	Preparing for Success Indicator: • Grades 3-8: SC Ready assessment in science grades 4 and 6 • High School: End-of-course assessments in Biology and U.S. History

Table 4: Profile-Accountability System Crosswalk: World Class Skills, Life and Career Characteristics

PROFILE OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA GRADUATE	SOUTH CAROLINA ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM
World Class Skills • Creativity and Innovation • Critical Thinking and Problem Solving • Collaboration and Teamwork • Communication, information, media and technology, knowing how to learn	Indirectly addressed via: Student Engagement (All Schools) Graduation Rate (High Schools) College Ready (High Schools) • Qualifying performance on ACT, SAT, AP, IB or dual enrollment
Life and Career Characteristics • Integrity • Self-Direction • Global Perspective • Perseverance • Work Ethic • Interpersonal Skills	Career Ready (HS): • Career and Technical Education (CTE) completer with earned credential, qualifying score on career readiness assessment or Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), complete work-based learning program

The Center also identified components of the current accountability system that are reported, but not factored into a school's annual rating, that can inform the skills and characteristics in the Profile. These components include:

- Percentage of students passing the Civics test,
- Participation and passage rates for advanced courses,
- College applications, college enrollment, and FAFSA completions,
- LIFE and Palmetto Fellow Scholarship information,
- Average ACT and SAT scores,
- Dual enrollment/credit success rate and,
- CTE enrollment and work-based learning.

Finally, the Center conducted a scan of college and career readiness (CCR) measures and SQSS indicators in other states and summarized its findings with the committee. The key findings included:

- Most states have expanded the range of CCR indicators to include advanced coursework and select career ready credentials.

- Few states have explored SQSS options other than 1) additional academic indicators and 2) attendance or absenteeism.

    - Infrequently, we find examples of surveys and participation in enrichment activities or courses.

    - We find no states that have incorporated formal, direct measures of trans-academic skills. Some indirect measures may be found in indicators such as service or co/extra-curricular activities.

- ***Compared to other states, South Carolina's system stands among the more broad and innovative state accountability models.***

REVIEW OF ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM COMPONENTS

The AAC reviewed and provided recommendations on the system components during its third meeting. For discussion purposes, the accountability system components were grouped into three main categories: academic indicators, readiness measures, and trans-academic measures. For each category of system components, the committee members noted recommendations for additions or changes to the current approach. They also identified priorities for additional research. Their feedback was used to craft the recommendations presented in the next section.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The section summarizes the key recommendations by the AAC. These recommendations represent the priorities expressed by committee members during the first three meetings, then expounded on and confirmed by the committee in the remaining webinars. The recommendations are organized into three categories:

1. Revising the ESSA School Accountability System

2. Enhancing Data Collection and/or Reporting

3. Engaging in Further Research and Development

The first category represents changes to the indicators or design decisions that inform ratings or classifications of schools in the state and federal accountability systems. The second category reflects suggestions for additional information the state should collect and publicly report to help a wide range of stakeholders (e.g., policymakers, community leaders, educators, and parents) better understand and support school success. The third category represents ideas that the committee feels are promising but will benefit from additional research to determine if or how they might be suitable for implementation.

REVISING THE ESSA SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

Recommendation #1
Develop and report new information related to achievement gaps in academic performance that:

• Includes all student groups,

• Is tied to a fixed and meaningful criterion, and

• Measures progress toward elimination of gaps.

Achievement gap measures should influence school ratings in addition to being prominently and clearly reported in a manner that is easily accessed and understood by stakeholders. Schools with achievement gaps that are large and persistent should NOT attain favorable ratings.

Rationale
The AAC identified "elimination of access and equity gaps" as a central goal for the school accountability system. While the current system includes indicators that address this goal, such as student progress for the lowest 20% at each school, the current approach may not be sufficiently transparent and influential.

Recommendation #2
Evaluate the current school performance ratings to ensure they reflect clear, appropriate, and consistent criteria. This includes the following:

• Study the range of 'school profiles' for each rating level to certify these patterns are appropriate and consistent with the state's educational goals, especially related to equity,

• Revise performance expectations as necessary, and

• Clearly communicate the meaning of each rating in terms of the expected performance

Rationale
School ratings are important signals to stakeholders about performance that is valued and the outcomes we want South Carolina students to attain. The meaning and interpretation of each rating should reflect these values in a manner that is clear, consistent, and supported by evidence.

Recommendation #3
Consider the following changes to the graduation rate and college and career readiness (CCR) indicators:

- Evaluate and potentially adjust the weights of graduation rate and the CCR indicators, and
- Include extended (5-year) graduation rate, but with the following parameters:
    - Extended graduation rate should have less influence than the traditional 4-year rate to maintain on-time graduation as the primary goal, and
    - Extended graduation rate alone should not decrease accountability scores.

Rationale
High school graduation and readiness for college and career is a central goal and should be heavily incentivized in the state's school accountability model. Including extended graduation rate will further support the equity and college-career readiness priorities articulated by the AAC. That is, it sends the message that different educational pathways are allowable for different students, such as students with disabilities and English learners, who often need more than four years to graduate from high school due to their specific needs or circumstances.

Recommendation #4
Career-ready credit should be awarded to qualifying students who earn the South Carolina High School Credential. The state should engage in ongoing evaluation and monitoring to ensure that students are not inappropriately routed to this option.

Rationale
The accountability system should honor the accomplishments of students with disabilities who have met the state's standards for demonstrating employability skills and career readiness.

ENHANCING DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING

Recommendation #5
The state should conduct ongoing monitoring and evaluation of all career readiness measures to ensure patterns of participation and performance demonstrate that students are well-prepared for post-secondary career success. Evaluation results should be publicly and prominently reported.

Rationale
The committee discussed at length the career readiness criterion related to military readiness currently operationalized as earning a qualifying score on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). Some members of the committee expressed concern that the ASVAB qualification criterion may not reflect the appropriate level of rigor. In particular, "are students using ASVAB as a means to

circumvent other career criteria?" Another critique was that the ASVAB was not a suitable measure for the accountability system, as this assessment addresses factors outside of a school's influence. To be clear, all members of the committee expressed a desire to honor military service. The committee's interest was in ensuring the criteria were appropriate and not working against other system goals.

To better understand this issue, the SCDE provided data analyses revealing that fewer than 2% of students demonstrate career readiness based on ASVAB alone (1.2% of the full cohort; 1.65% of career-ready students). Moreover, there were no districts with unusually high rates of identification based on ASVAB alone. These analyses represent the types of monitoring and evaluation that should be regularly conducted and reported.

The committee also discussed whether it would be prudent to combine ASVAB performance with another criterion, such as completing a military course pathway. Ultimately this idea was not endorsed for a number of reasons, not least was the unequal access to the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) courses. While the committee decided to refrain from making a recommendation related to military readiness, this was not a unanimous decision. A minority of committee members expressed a preference for adjusting or removing the ASVAB criteria.

Although the committee did not discuss any of the other career readiness measures, the insights gained via the inquiry into military readiness shaped this recommendation. Specifically, the accountability model will be strengthened by ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and public reporting of all career readiness measures.

Recommendation #6

The committee supports research, development, and implementation of a reporting initiative to better communicate *Conditions for Success* for South Carolina's districts and schools. This component should include factors such as:

- Educator quality, training, and competencies, including cultural competencies,
- Diversity of educator and leader workforce,
- Rates of disciplinary actions, such as suspension and expulsion, including for early learners,
- Access to resources within the community (e.g., mentoring programs, parent engagement, corporate partnerships), and
- Data to inform readiness and capacity for remote learning such as infrastructure (e.g., device availability, connectivity) and training.

The *Conditions for Success* indicator should be reported in a clear and accessible manner and include, whenever feasible, breakdowns for districts, schools, and student groups. Draft report templates or mock-ups should be vetted with stakeholders to help ensure information is clear and complete.

The *Conditions for Success* indicator will likely include both standardized metrics and information to be customized for districts and schools to reflect the unique communities and initiatives across South Carolina schools. Because the committee was clear that this component should not be used to rate schools or support causal inferences, this recommendation does not work against the design goal of providing standardized comparable data used to inform school ratings.

Rationale

The AAC identified "elimination of access and equity gaps" as a central goal for the school accountability system. Understanding and addressing conditions for success is vital to achieving this goal. Data from this indicator will also help support the AAC's goal to produce clear, actionable information to support schools.

ENGAGING IN FURTHER RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Finally, the committee developed a number of recommendations for further research and development. These recommendations, presented in Table 5, reflect priorities of the committee and potentially promising new directions. However, the ideas will benefit from additional examination to more fully explore the range of alternatives and the potential benefits or unintended consequences.

Table 5: Recommendations for Ongoing Research and Development

RECOMMENDATION	RATIONALE
Research alternatives for developing academic and trans-academic measures for students in K-2.	There is currently an 'information gap' prior to grade three. Additional information will help educators better understand and support student success for early learners.
Consider developing state guidance and standards for performance demonstrations (e.g., capstone projects, service initiatives, research studies) for South Carolina high school students.	Many of the world class skills and life and career characteristics prominent in the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate* are not adequately cultivated and measured. A performance demonstration could help students demonstrate a range of these critical trans-academic skills in an area of interest to the student associated with his or her post-secondary goals.
Evaluate alternatives for through-course assessment.	End-of-year summative assessments do not provide sufficient or timely information to inform instruction. Providing measures 'along-the-way' may help educators better address student needs throughout the year and could potentially leveraged to inform summative classifications.
Assess whether the criteria for student progress, for both the academic content areas and English language proficiency, are appropriate.	While the AAC did not offer recommendations for changes to the progress indicators, they raised questions about whether the criterion for rewarding progress is appropriate. The criterion should be achievable and fair for all students regardless of 'starting position' and should be sufficiently rigorous such that students receiving favorable scores are on-track to proficiency in a reasonable amount of time.
Social sciences, especially citizenship, is not adequately addressed. Consider additional measures, perhaps for each grade.	The development and practice of the knowledge and skills necessary to be an engaged citizen in the 21st century has never been more important. More emphasis should be placed on cultivating and measuring these skills in South Carolina schools.

CONCLUSION

The Accountability Advisory Committee (AAC) conducted a comprehensive review of the South Carolina accountability system in a series of meetings from February to December 2020. The AAC took care to develop clear goal statements, articulate design priorities, and produce recommendations coherent with these foundational principles.

The culminating recommendations are detailed in this report. The recommendations address 1) revisions to the system, 2) reporting enhancements, and 3) priorities for ongoing research. The AAC hopes these recommendations will promote equity, better incentivize, and reflect a wide range of skills associated with the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*, and provide more useful information to support student and school improvement.

APPENDIX – AAC MEETING/WEBINAR ATTENDANCE RECORD

MEMBER\MEETING DATE	2/24	5/5	7/28	10/27	11/9	12/10	12/16
Molly Spearman	√						
Melanie Barton			√	√	√	√	
Cynthia Downs	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Brian Newsome	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Jessica Jackson	√		√	√	√		
James Burton			√				
Jo Anne Anderson	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
J.T. McLawhorn	√	√	√	√	√		√
Chandra Jefferson	√	√	√	√			
Neal Vincent	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Sandy Brossard	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Takesha Pollock	√	√	√	√		√	
Ian Feigel	√	√	√	√		√	√
Wanda Hassler	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Hope Rivers	√	√	√				
Georgia Mjartan	√	√	√		√	√	

CYCLICAL REVIEW OF
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ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

Accountability Framework Report